1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi



843 the appropriate time which I could obtain was that it took place 'when the woman's belly has grown large'. The first part of it was performed for Sacsac at Kurtatchi on March 13; her baby was born on April 30. Her mother, with whom she was staying, decided when it should be done.

843 A man was sent out into the bush to catch a young opossum. It
825 must be brought to the village alive. Then a woman takes hold of
842 the live opossum and rubs its back against the abdomen of the expectant mother. No particular woman, relative or otherwise, was specified as suitable for this duty, but in the case of Sacsac it was performed by her mother. It must be done just before sunrise. After rubbing the animal up and down several times against the woman's abdomen, the operator lets it fall to the ground. This represents the birth of the child. The people standing round ask: 'What sort of child is it?' If the opossum is a male, the woman says: 'It is a boy', if a female, she says: 'It is a girl.' This is supposed to be prognostic of the sex of the expected child, but my informants admitted that it was not always correct! I was not able to ascertain any views held by these natives as to the determination of sex, apart from this performance, and as far as I could ascertain the sex of the opossum was regarded only as an indication, not as a cause, of the sex of the baby.

843 The opossum is then killed by having its head struck on the
825 ground. Its hair is singed off, and it is boiled in a pot with some
[262] taro. Its flesh must be eaten only by women who have borne children without difficulty, otherwise the mother's delivery will be a hard one. In the case of Sacsac, her mother, who has had seven children, six of whom are living, ate most of it. The pregnant woman herself must drink the water in which the opossum has
[302] been boiled. Then her hair is cut short all round her head just above the ears, and is smeared all over with black paint. Up to this time she has not been allowed to use paint on her head.

843 Then she goes to the sea and washes. She looks for a gap in the
782 reef where the water is pouring in towards the shore very rapidly. Over this she must jump. The action is said to have the effect of shaking up the child so that when it is born delivery will take place quickly. Meanwhile, the women have been collecting all the débris from the food that has been cooked in connexion with the ceremony (the leaves and peelings of the taro, the bones of the opossum, &c.). Some of them carry it down to the sea, accompanying the pregnant

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi



woman when she goes to wash. As it is thrown into the sea and carried away by the current, all the women call out:

*Som si mē mon ta bai'i ta dum tsūn.*
Give woman child good very

No names are mentioned, but it is understood that it is the *urar* who are called upon. Then the woman puts on a girdle made of the black outside layer of the trunk of the bush banana, and fixes some leaves of the plant called *5ts* into it in front, so that they hang down over her genitals. This plant is one which is always planted in the taro garden in order to ensure a good crop. She must continue to wear this belt until the second part of the pregnancy ceremony has been performed.

When her mother thinks that the time has come for this, which she estimates by noticing the pregnant woman's bodily condition, she takes a certain black stone, washes it carefully, and decorates it with streaks of black and red paint. With the stone she makes passes round the woman's body, touching the skin, and then rubs it on her abdomen, pressing downwards. As she is being rubbed, the pregnant woman must say: 'I want a good child who will be born easily.' Then the child that is in the stone comes out and passes into the woman and helps the real child to be born. The stone is put back into the hut, carefully wrapped up in fibre, to be kept till it is wanted again for the same purpose. The woman takes off her girdle and has her hair cut short over the rest of her head, where it was not cut on the previous occasion. If she has come to her mother's village specially for this ceremony she may now go back to her husband's people. There is no feast at this part of the proceedings.

The black stones used for rubbing the pregnant woman's abdomen are much prized. With great difficulty I succeeded in obtaining one which had been used for the wife of the man who gave it to me; he said she would not have any more children so she would not want it again. It is of a volcanic nature, a species of diorite. It measures $4\frac{1}{2} \times 2$ in., is oval in shape, and water-worn. It was probably obtained from the bed of one of the rivers which flow from the volcanic interior of the island, and must have come from some distance, because there is no stone of that nature anywhere near the village.

The young woman for whom I saw this ceremony performed

## CHILDHOOD



here described as nearly as I could ascertain in the order in which they would be performed.

1. *At birth.*

While a woman *tsunaun* is in labour, every one in the village abstains from food. As soon as the child is born, the slit-gong is beaten, and a feast is held, with food provided by the child's relatives. Any one connected with the child, both on its mother's and its father's side, will contribute food, and the more food provided the greater is the prestige. The food is distributed among the people of the village, and there is a *kōma* that night. For the birth of a commoner there is no general fasting, no slit-gong, no feast, and no *kōma*.

2. *At first washing.*

All the people of the village, both men and women, must abstain from eating pig and fish till the child is washed on the fifth day. Then a pig is killed, and cooked in a pot, not roasted as is the general method of cooking pigs for feasts. All the women prepare large quantities of taro. A fire is made, small pieces of taro, pig, and fish are placed in the fire, and the *urar* of all the important people of the child's clan, not only those who died long since, but also those who have not long been dead, are called upon by name, with the adjuration:

*'Komu tsura, nom en a tamū, a ta gū, a ta ien, sa*
Here is fire, you eat taro, pig, fish, so that
*nabax ēn sas ta ta ien to babēn ner, a ta gū mē.'*
the people (may) eat again fish forbidden, pig also.

The *urar* hear this; they come and eat what has been burned. This lifts the taboo on eating flesh foods for the people of the village and for the child's relatives, except its parents.

3. *In the early days.*

'While it is still a new baby', there is a ceremony involving those of its relatives who stand to the child in the relationship called *watʃitʃio*, in particular its mother's mother's brother's daughters. The men of the village go out on to the reef and catch a number of the tiny fish called *karios*. These are about the size of a large minnow, and are usually regarded as not worth catching, except by small children for fun. They are brought to the child's hut,

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi



852 565 574 commoner picks it up and stores it away carefully in the rafters of her hut, where it remains indefinitely. The women all play with the remaining balls of ceremonial pudding, throwing them at each other; when they are tired of this they eat up the remains of the taro.

After this the child may be put down to sit or play on the ground at any time. He continues to wear the *sekwit* leaves for a few days.

852 565 782 When the child's parents think it is time to take off the *sekwit* leaves, they make more ceremonial pudding, and invite the women of the village again. A fire is made, and some of the pudding is burnt on it, while the *urar* are called upon to come and eat; but not this time individually by name.

*'Urar, komu tsura, nom en a tamū, mom sek rik nom*
Spirits, here is fire you eat taro, we (exclusive form) want loosen

*u sekwit kurin a bai'i, bai'i to tsuga non ia.'*
the plant (from) hand of child, child dislikes it.

Then powdered lime is spread round the fire in a circle, the women dab some on their ears, then they take the *sekwit* leaves off the child and throw them away into the enclosure made on the occasion of a previous ceremony.

6. *On returning from the first journey.*

852 565 This I saw done at Petats; it happens also in the Bougainville villages, so I have included it in the series. In the Petats dialect it is called *lolōas*, in the Kurtatchi dialect *wakōkoa*. It is also performed for adults after a particularly difficult trip, and for important visitors who come from a distance, but for children only on this one occasion.

On the evening of the day when Tiusai had taken her baby son, Kaup, with her to fish on the reef for the first time, she sat on her verandah with Kari, her husband's mother's sister (*haihis*), and Bohin, her husband's mother's sister's son's wife (*munihan*.) Her [415] own people live on another island. Some of the younger women of the village brought large bush-taro leaves and twisted them up into bags which would hold water. Then they went into the sea and filled them with sea-water, and running at full speed through the village, poured the water over the legs of the three women. None was poured over the legs of the child. This they did twice. The leaves were then hung up on the sides of the hut, where they

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi



only, and not in the preparation of 'medicines', or in any magical procedure.

In this connexion also must be mentioned the multifarious uses of lime (*iav*). Not only is it added to the mixtures used for a number of medicinal and magical purposes, it is also efficacious alone, e.g. it is rubbed on to a man who is *iburar* (see p. 516) and on to a patient suffering from a sprain or a broken bone. Instances of its use for magical purposes both with and without areca-nut occur in almost every chapter of this book. Its importance in medicine and magic in San Cristoval is pointed out by Fox (1924, p. 245), who brings evidence to show that betel-chewing is a comparatively recent innovation, and considers that the use of lime for ceremonial purposes must be earlier. He suggests as one possible reason for its being 'considered a good conductor of *mena*', that lime is necessary for the production of dyes and pigments, especially the important red dye. Lime is not used for such a purpose in North Bougainville, so that the reason for its importance in that area must lie elsewhere. That it is considered to have some intimate connexion with the *urar* is clear from the practice of burning it to propitiate them when it is thought that some cause of offence has been given, e.g. in the act of cleaning the road beside the grave-yard, described on p. 517.

It must be remembered that these spirits of the dead, while they are feared by the living and at the same time regarded as their helpers in time of need, are not propitiated in the ordinary routine of life, but only when it is thought that they may have been angered, or when their help is required for some definite purpose. The most usual method of appeal seems to be to mention by name one or more *urar* specially appropriate to the occasion; at the taro garden those who were good gardeners, successful fishermen to ensure a good catch, and so on. Having been called upon by name, they may also be told what is desired of them in specific terms: 'Butchiar, look at that woman, bring her to me, I want her', 'Pulaget, Soat, Tsining, look at our rod and catch bonito for us', 'Sawē, Malia, Kerep, look at this broken bone and fasten it'. Again, the name of the *urar* may be used without any injunction. In a treatment for strained muscle, which I witnessed, the name of the *urar* Pispoa (the spirit of a man who, when he was alive, was skilled in treating similar cases) was whispered repeatedly into a lime-pot held by the operator. I was told that Pispoa then came and stayed inside the

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi



775 755 lime-pot, making the lime powerful. Lime from this pot was then used in massaging the patient.

775 782 The question now arises, are the *urar* thus addressed being cajoled into conferring a favour, or commanded to perform a task which they cannot refuse? This has been suggested as a criterion separating religion from magic (Rivers, 1914, vol. ii, p. 405). It is true that most of the formulae are couched in the imperative. But the [781] reverent tone in which they were spoken, in cases where I actually saw the ritual performed (less evident where it is merely related), leaves me in no doubt that it is a plea, not a command, which is intended. This is supported by the fact that the address to the *urar* is sometimes preceded by an offering of food burnt in the fire for them, or some bit of ritual involving lime. It is also consonant with the general attitude of awe, largely mingled with terror, which [781] characterizes the relations between human beings and the *urar* throughout. (See Chapter XIV.)

789 In some cases formulae are used in which the *urar* do not figure. These may take the form of a direct command: 'Come, bonito, come plenty, come to my village', 'Garfish, garfish, come and take hold of my line'. Or the command may be given to the apparatus to do its work: 'Catch them, catch them', said to the bonito hook, or 'Fetch the man here', to the medicine used in war magic. Again, the formula may be a simple asseveration that what is required will, or has, come to pass: 'You and I spit on the taro, now it is large', 'All the women are waiting with their baskets, to-morrow the place will be full of *tsuwaluy*'.

In all cases where formulae are used, they are kept secret. In some, notably those used in bonito magic, it was stated that the words must be passed on only to a son or a sister's son, in others they might be told to any one, provided payment were made. I have instances in my collection of such knowledge having been obtained from father, mother, mother's brother, and grandparents, as well as from strangers. Love magic is often referred to the people of the [609] mountains; this is interesting, as the relations between the mountain people and the coastal people are not normally friendly.

This brings us to the consideration of the place of these formulae in the native scheme of magico-religious procedure. It will have been noticed that in many cases no mention is made of any words being spoken. It may be that in some of these, the secret part of the procedure was either intentionally or inadvertently